Rail transport statistics

2001/0048(COD) - 20/12/2007 - Follow-up document

In accordance with provisions set out in Regulation (EC) N° 91/2003 on rail transport statistics, the Commission is obliged to submit a report to the European Parliament and to the Council on the application of this Regulation. It is to do so every three years. This is the first such report and covers the period 2003-2005.

To recall, the main objective of the Regulation is to provide the Commission, other EU Institutions, national governments and the general public with comparable, reliable, harmonised, regular and comprehensive statistical data on the scale and development of the carriage of freight and passengers by rail in the EU. The Regulation applies directly, and in its entirety, to all Member States although it does not need to be transposed into national legislation.

The report finds that the overall data obtained regarding implementation of the Regulation is very positive. The resources put into applying the Regulation – both at a Community, as well as a national level, have allowed for a quick production of comparable and reliable results. Data provisions, over the last two years, have improved considerably, albeit a few problems remain – particularly as regards the completeness of data provided. The report also finds that all of the Member States respected the May 2007 deadline for forwarding quarterly data.

Further, most issues covered by the Regulation such as data collection, compilation, transmission and validation have been addressed and correctly tackled. Indeed, implementation of the Regulation has resulted in an increase in the availability of sector specific information. The collection of rail statistics has had an immediate affect on policy making, particularly as regards the development, implementation and monitoring of the rail transport sector. Data dissemination, through different public means, has contributed to the visibility of the whole process.

Based on these findings, the Commission sets out a number of short-term as well as long-term developments:

Short-term developments:

In the short-term the Commission is proposing to:

- finalise the introduction of harmonised definitions for improved comparability between different countries and different modes of transport;
- integrate and harmonise some rail accident data in order to avoid duplication;
- improve the quality of data;
- disseminate traffic flows on the rail network and regional data;
- require Eurostat to monitor Bulgaria and Romania in order to guarantee that they comply with EU legislation on rail transport statistics;
- lift confidentiality restrictions to allow for a timely dissemination of EU aggregates.

Long-term developments:

In the long term, the Commission acknowledges that new variables may need to be introduced, based on data user needs – such as train-km performance divided into diesel and electricity, which could be useful for environmental purposes. Similarly, there may be a need to collect data on high-speed passenger trains such as the number of passengers, and the passenger-km and the train-km ratio. This needs to be balanced

against the wishes of the Member State who remark on the problems of collecting this kind of data and the need to justify any further burdens. However, there are at least two future developments, not linked to new data requirements, that are foreseen in the long-term. They are:

- A short reduction of the data transmission period to five months at the end of the observation period for the annual data on rail passengers, in line with the statistical data collection of other modes of transport.
- An extension of the geographical coverage due to either future EU enlargements of the voluntary involvement of third countries through cooperation agreements.